

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SPECULATION ON POSTAL WORKERS NEGOTIATIONS

REF: OTTAWA 2605

1. SUMMARY. INSIDE POSTAL WORKERS' NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE AT THE CONCILIATION STAGE. THE OUTCOME REMAINS UNCERTAIN. EARLY AUTUMN STRIKE MAY BE STRATEGY OF UNION. END SUMMARY.

2. SENIOR POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT (POD) OFFICIAL EXPLAINED STATUS OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WITH CANADIAN UNION OF POSTAL WORKERS (CUPW) AS FOLLOWS:

3. PROCESS OF CONCILIATION IS IN TWO STAGES. THE FIRST STAGE, OPEN HEARINGS, IS STILL IN PROCESS AND HAS BEEN THUS FOR OVER SIXTY DAYS. BOTH THE UNION, CUPW, AND THE POD-TREASURY BOARD HAVE BEEN PRESENTING THEIR POSITIONS ON WHAT THEY EXPECT TO BE INCORPORATED IN A NEW COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT. NORMALLY, THIS PROCESS TAKES TWELVE DAYS BUT THE PUBLIC SERVICE STAFF RELATIONS BOARD (PSSRB), WHICH APPOINTS THE CONCILIATION BOARD, CAN EXTEND THE TIME INDEFINITELY, AS IS THE CASE WITH THESE NEGOTIATIONS.

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TO DATE, TEN ARTICLES OF THE CONTRACT PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN SIGNED, OTHERS ARE BEING STUDIED AND THE REMAINDER WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE SECOND STAGE OF THE CONCILIATION PROCESS WHICH IS CONDUCTED IN CLOSED HEARINGS.

4. POD SPOKESMAN EXPLAINED SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES. ONE, CONCILIATION BOARD MEMBERS MAY BECOME DISILLUSIONED AND

ISSUE A REPORT SIMPLY TELLING BOTH PARTIES TO SETTLE THEIR OWN DIFFERENCES WITHIN CERTAIN GUIDELINES. SEVEN DAYS LATER, IF THE CUPW AND THE POD-TREASURY BOARD CANNOT AGREE ON A NEW CONTRACT, THE LEGALLY EXTENDED CONTRACT NOW IN FORCE SINCE ITS ORIGINAL TERMINATION DATE JUNE 30, 1977, BECOMES INOPERATIVE AS DOES ITS PROVISIONS, AND THE UNION CAN LEGALLY STRIKE AT THIS JUNCTURE. TWO, THE CONCILIATION BOARD MAY CONTINUE OPEN AND CLOSED HEARINGS FOR MONTHS SEEKING A MUTUAL AGREEMENT UNTIL SUCH TIME AS EITHER PARTY DROPS OUT OF THE PROCESS. IF THIS HAPPENS, THE UNION WOULD AGAIN BE IN A LEGAL POSITION TO STRIKE AFTER SEVEN DAYS.

5. IN THE OPINION OF THE POD SPOKESMAN, THE UNION WILL FOLLOW THE SECOND COURSE; THAT IS, IT WILL DELAY LEAVING THE CONCILIATION PROCESS UNTIL EARLY AUTUMN THEN BEGIN A SERIES OF SELECTIVE ROTATING STRIKES. CONSIDERING THAT 47 PERCENT OF THE MAIL GOES THROUGH THE TORONTO AREA POST OFFICE PLANTS AND CONSIDERING THE THREAT OF THE LONDON, ONTARIO LOCAL TO STRIKE EITHER LEGALLY OR ILLEGALLY, THE CUPW WOULD MOST LOGICALLY LEAD OFF ANY KIND OF STRIKE ACTION AT THE LONDON PLANT. ROTATING STRIKE ACTIVITY WOULD BE ALMOST AS EFFECTIVE AS A NATIONAL STRIKE AND WOULD COST THE UNION FAR LESS MONEY IN STRIKERS' SUPPORT, IN THE OPINION OF THE POD SPOKESMAN. FURTHERMORE, HE CONTINUED, CUPW WAS FORCED TO BORROW FROM ANOTHER UNION DURING THEIR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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1975 SIX-WEEK STRIKE WHICH THEY MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO DO THIS YEAR CONSIDERING THE LACK OF SUPPORT FROM OTHER CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS UNIONS. IN THE VIEW OF THE POD EXECUTIVE, THE UNION WILL PROBABLY WAIT UNTIL LATE SEPTEMBER, BREAK THE CONCILIATION PROCESS, CALL A STRIKE VOTE AND BEGIN SELECTIVE SHUT-DOWNS BEGINNING EARLY OCTOBER, WITH PLANS TO LAST THROUGH NOVEMBER, REACH A SETTLEMENT, AND THEN RETURN TO WORK AT THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER IN TIME TO HANDLE THE CHRISTMAS RUSH WITH MANY HOURS OF OVERTIME.

6. COMMENT: ALL OF THE ABOVE IS HIGHLY SPECULATIVE AND THERE ARE OTHER POSSIBILITIES. A NATIONAL ELECTION COULD BE CALLED FOR THE FALL WHICH WOULD BRING INTO PLAY BILL C-45 (SEE REFTTEL) PROHIBITING A POSTAL STRIKE SIXTY DAYS BEFORE AND SEVEN DAYS AFTER THE ELECTION. OF COURSE, CUPW COULD STRIKE AFTER THE ELECTION BUT SUCH ACTION WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY WORSEN THEIR PRESENT UNPOPULAR PUBLIC IMAGE AS CHRISTMAS DELIVERIES WOULD BE AFFECTED. ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE TO BREAK FROM THE CONCILIATION PROCESS AND STRIKE DURING THE SUMMER. THIS WOULD BE UNPOPULAR WITH CUPW MEMBERS BUT IT REMAINS A POSSIBILITY. MEANWHILE,

SPOKESMEN FOR THE POD AND CUPW CONTINUE TO FIRE SALVOS AT
ONE ANOTHER IN THE MEDIA. DUEMLING

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